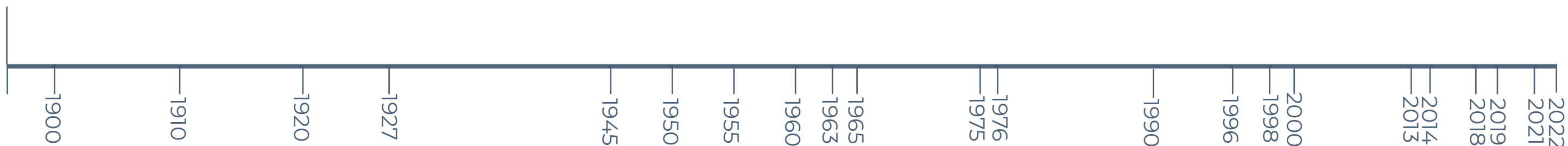


With the increase in tourism, created by George Burt's paddle steamer service during the late 19th Century, it soon became obvious that Swanage needed a new Pier. The first greenheart pile was driven into the seabed on November 30th, 1895. The Pier was officially opened on March 29th, 1897. Sadly, Burt died in 1894, so did not live to see the successful Pier opened.



1896

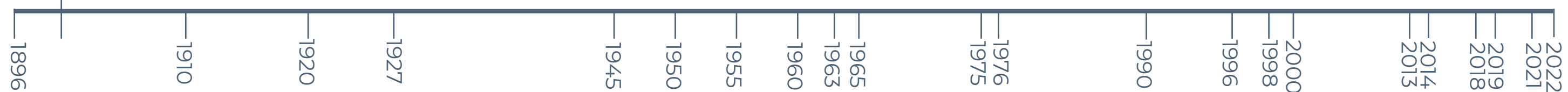


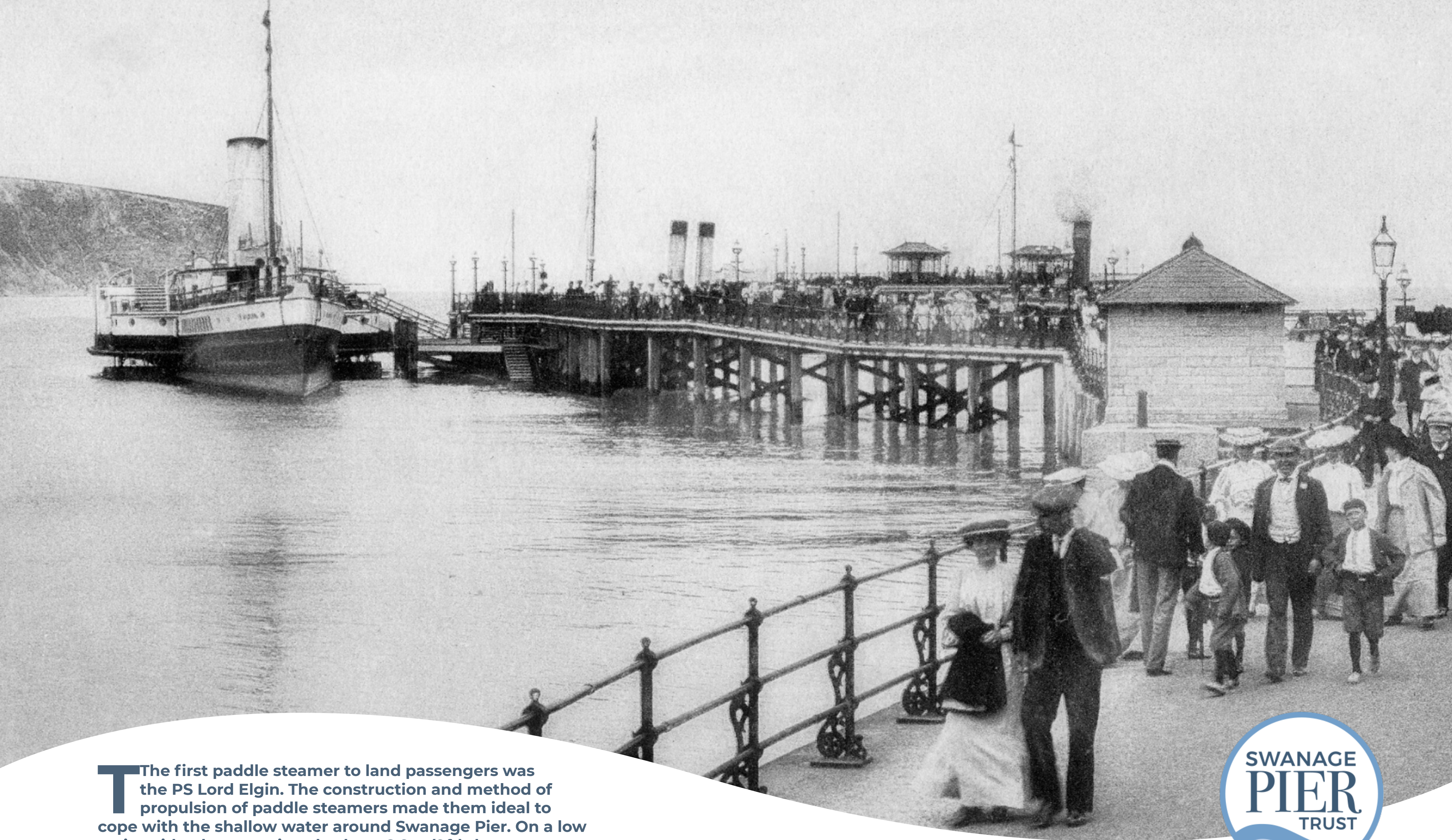


By the early 1900s, the New Pier, as it became called, was attracting large numbers of visitors. In its first year of operation 10,000 visitors landed. The famous paddle steamer, PS Balmoral was a regular visitor to the Pier in the early days and still visits occasionally to this day.



c1900





The first paddle steamer to land passengers was the PS Lord Elgin. The construction and method of propulsion of paddle steamers made them ideal to cope with the shallow water around Swanage Pier. On a low spring tide, the water is only about 2.9m (9ft) deep.



c1910

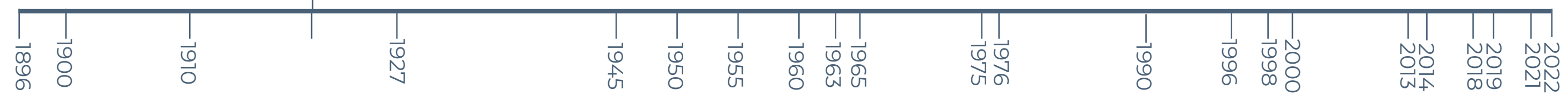




Passengers arriving at the end of the Pier would have to walk nearly two hundred metres (642 ft) before they reached the gatehouse. In the early part of the 20th century, they would have been met with horses and carriages to be taken on a perambulation around Swanage and the surrounding villages.



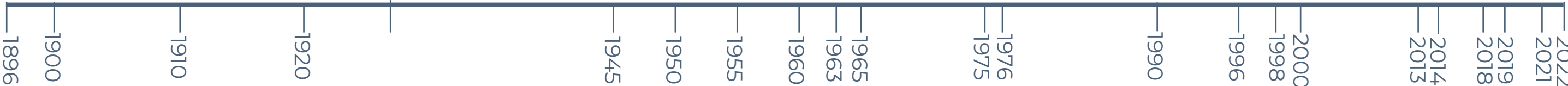
c1920





At the end of the 1920s, the effects of the gribble worm were beginning to be seen on the structure of both Piers. This tiny little crustacean burrows into the wood of the piles gradually destroying them. The Pier master at the time had to be a hard hat diver and was responsible for encasing the damaged piles in concrete.

c1927

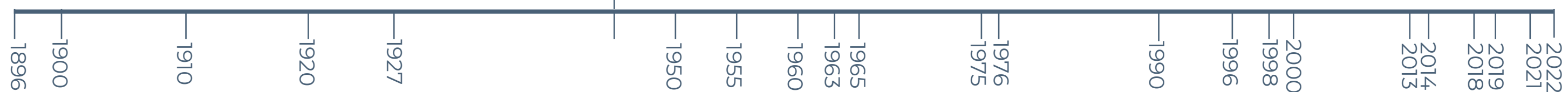




At the beginning of World War 2 the Pier was seen as a possible landing site for the Germans. Plans were made to blow up the Pier and so dynamite charges were laid. At the last minute the army decided to simply remove the first forty feet of the old and new Pier.



c1945

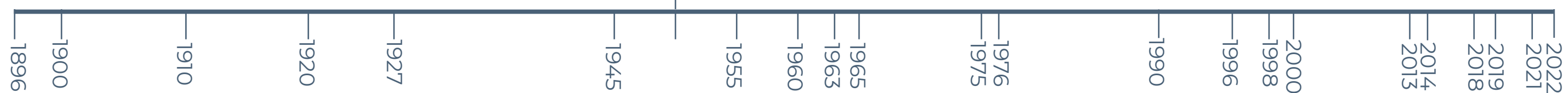




Following the war, the Pier was reinstated and throughout the 1950s a trip to Swanage on a paddle steamer became a popular pastime in the summer. By this time the Old Pier started to become derelict but still had a diving platform on it for the Swanage Sea Swimming Club.



c1950





Pier master William Walker Elliott was often helped by his grandson Graham Elliot. Graham remembers this photo being taken on either a Tuesday or Thursday when he helped his grandfather with the docking of the PS Consul, from Weymouth.



c1955



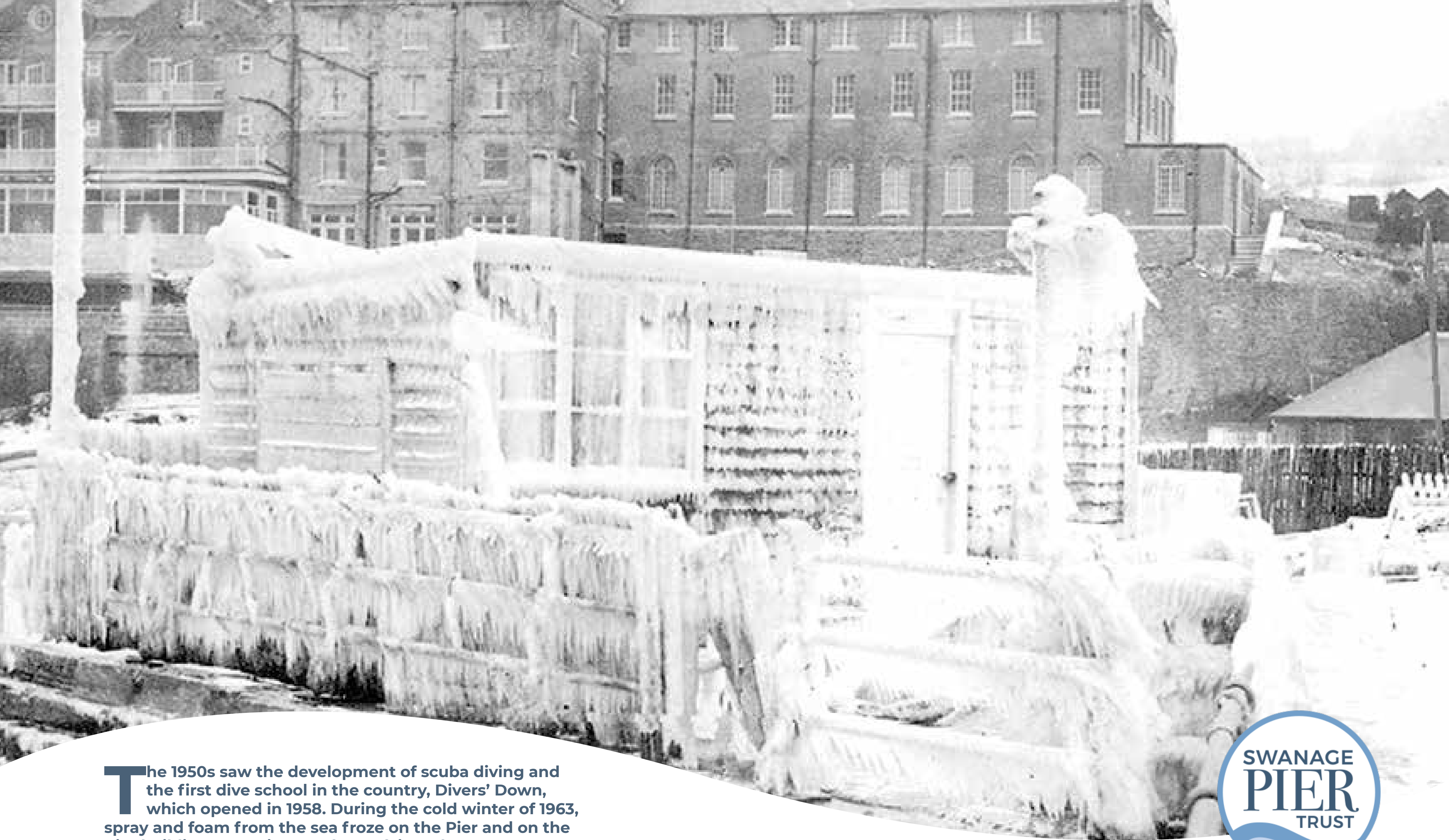


With the advent of air travel and package holidays, the paddle steamer trade began to decline and, in 1966, the last paddle steamer, PS Embassy, left the Pier. It would be another thirty years before vessels such as the Waverly and the Balmoral returned to the Pier.



c1960

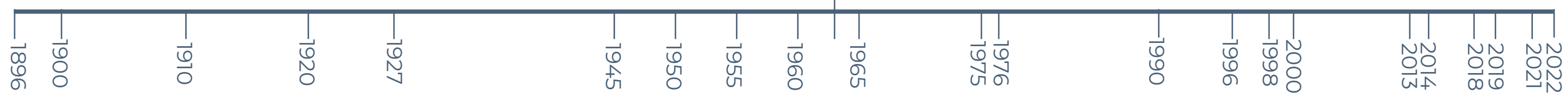


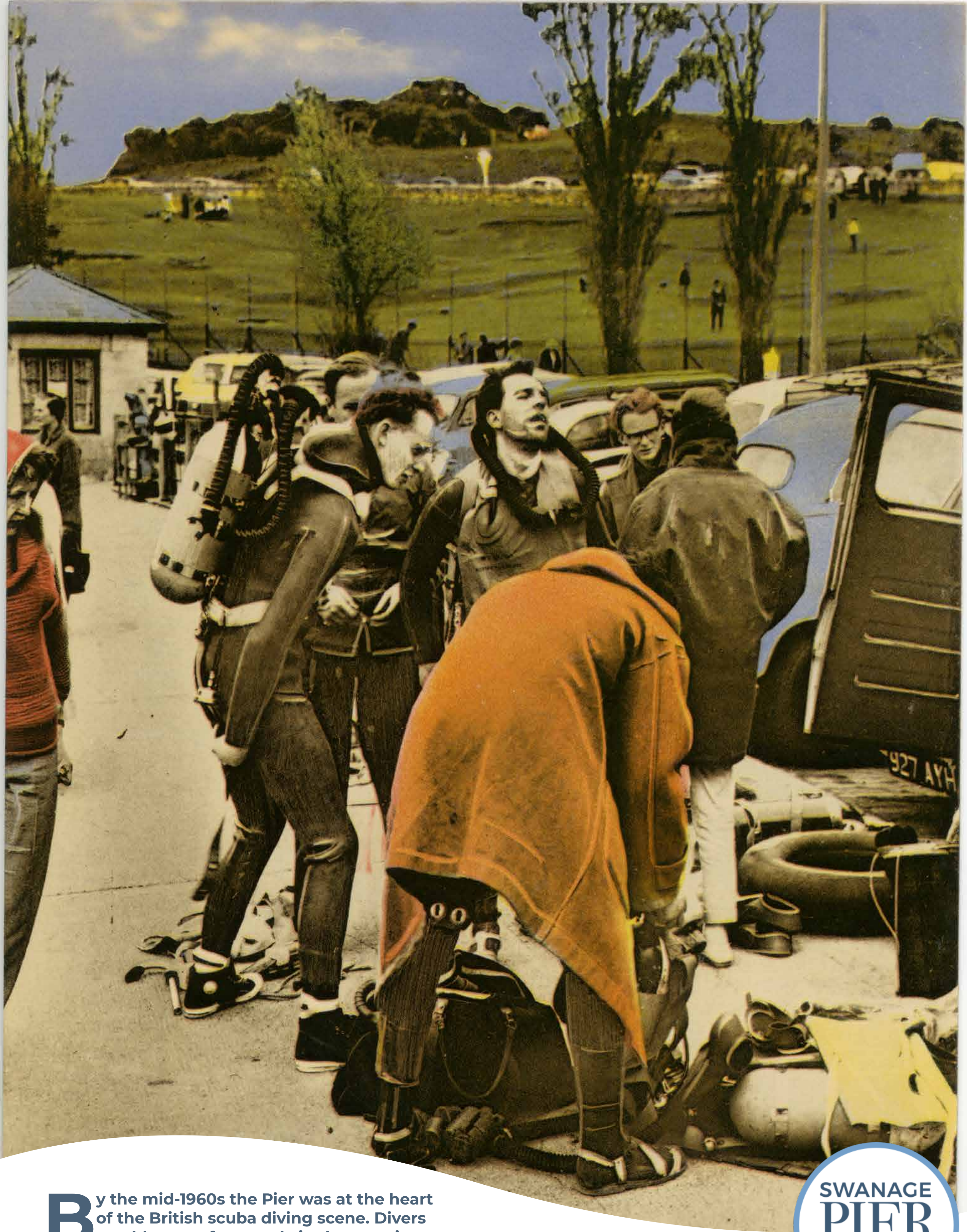


The 1950s saw the development of scuba diving and the first dive school in the country, Divers' Down, which opened in 1958. During the cold winter of 1963, spray and foam from the sea froze on the Pier and on the Pier buildings, creating an almost fairy-tale appearance.



1963





By the mid-1960s the Pier was at the heart of the British scuba diving scene. Divers would queue from early in the morning to get a space on the Pier. This still happens today and, if it wasn't for the clothes and cars, this scene could be from the 2020s.

c1965

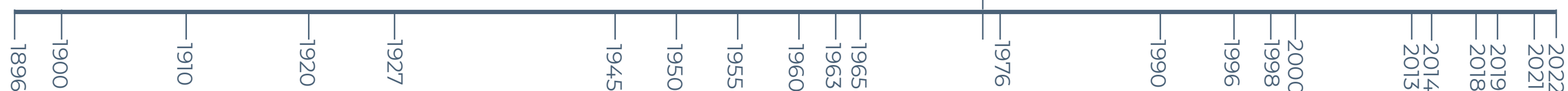




Without the paddle steamer trade, the fortunes of the Pier began to decline. Despite the downturn in numbers, the Pier was still a popular place for people to relax and spend time fishing or to sit and enjoy the view. The Grosvenor Hotel became involved in the Pier and ran trips on their motor launch, the Grosvenor Hostess.



c1975

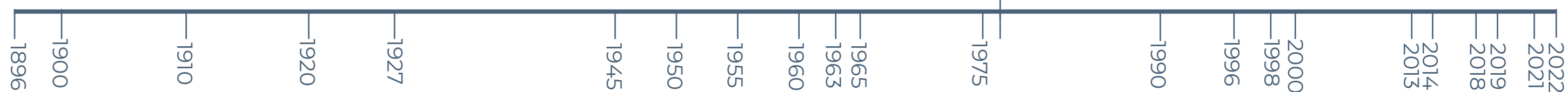




Despite being given Grade 2 listed status in 1976, the structure of the Pier continued to deteriorate. Storms and the ravages of the gribble worm took its toll and the wooden structure was closed in 1982 as it was deemed unsafe.



c1976

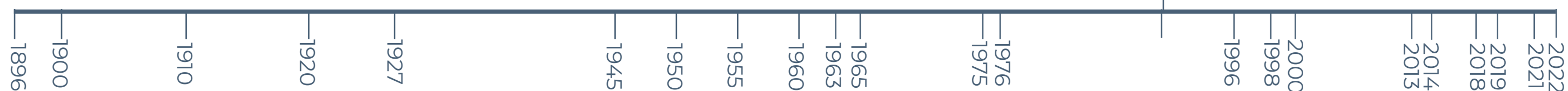




Work continued throughout the 1990s. Much of the funding for the renovations came from The National Lottery Heritage Fun. The Pier Trust and the Friends of Swanage Pier raised the balance of nearly £300,000 in four short years. This was achieved with huge support from the local community and visitors.



c1990

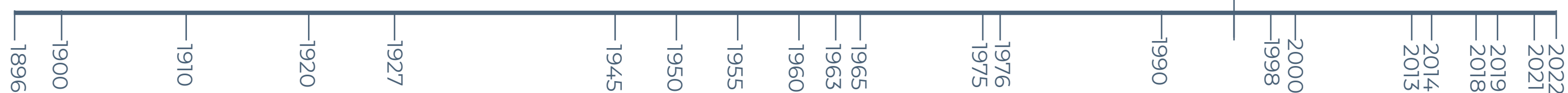


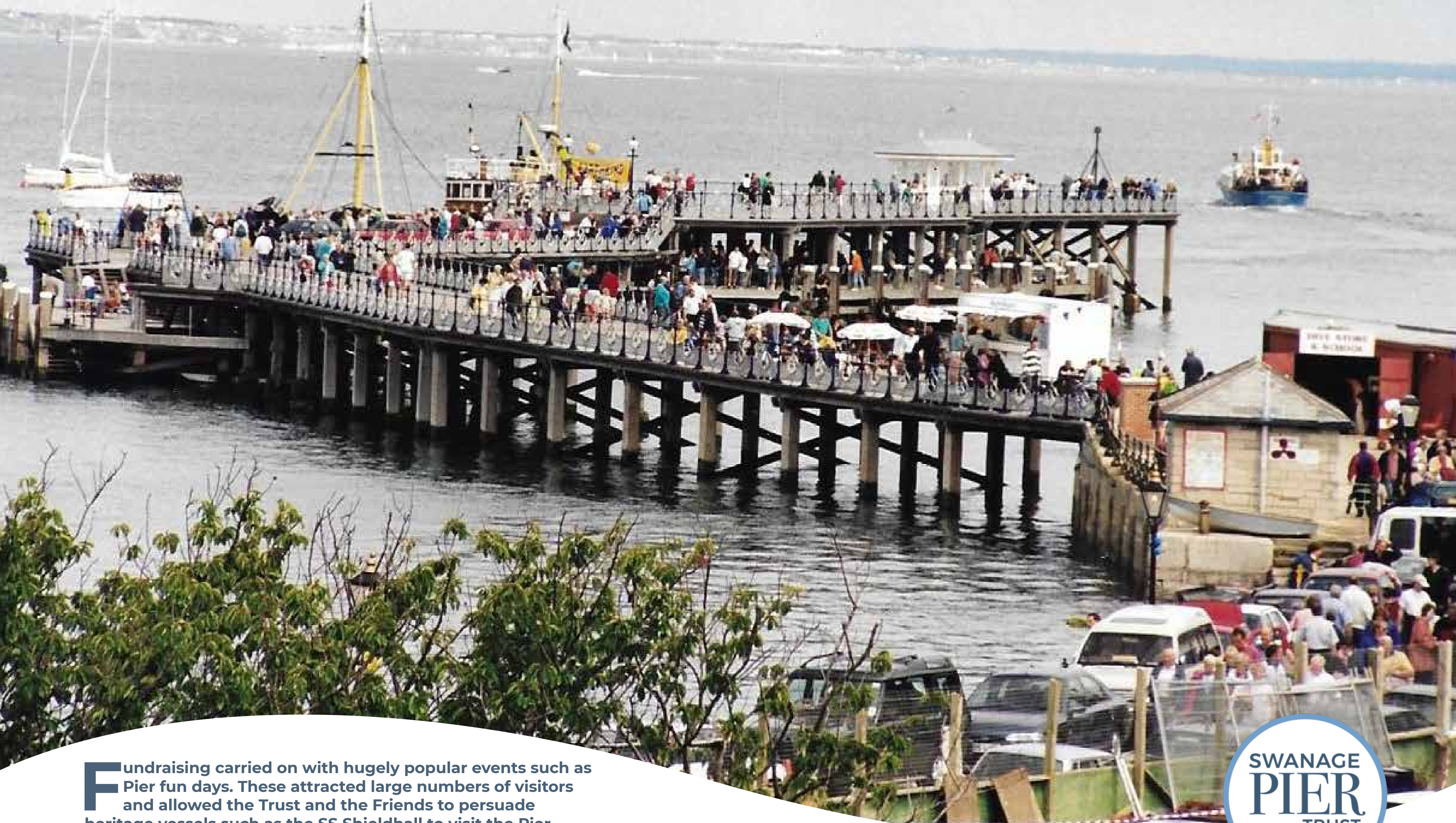


In 1994, the newly formed Swanage Pier Trust took control of the Pier Company with the aim of keeping the Pier open to residents and visitors and providing for its eventual total restoration. Hard working volunteers began the painstaking task of restoring the Pier to its former glory. Volunteers still play an essential role in maintaining and running the Pier today.



1996

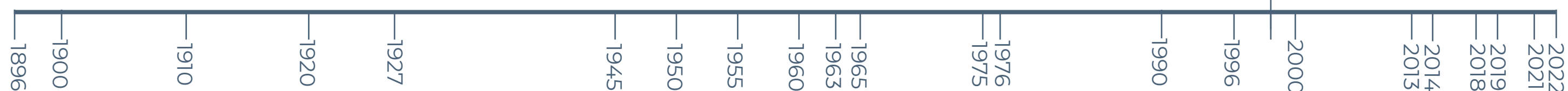




Fundraising carried on with hugely popular events such as Pier fun days. These attracted large numbers of visitors and allowed the Trust and the Friends to persuade heritage vessels such as the SS Shieldhall to visit the Pier. Without the efforts of these early volunteers, the Pier would not be in such favourable condition today.



1998





No matter what the weather, the Pier is a magical place. Even in the strongest storm, the coldest weather or the hottest day of the year, the Pier holds a unique charm. In 2012 the restored Pier was awarded the ‘Pier of The Year’ by the National Piers Society.



c2000

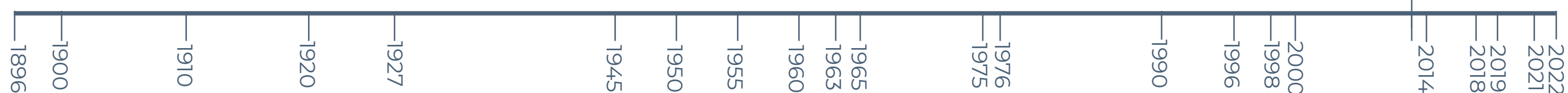




The Pier suffered severe damage during the winter storms of 2013 / 2014 and part of the middle section of the Pier collapsed. The Pier was once again closed for safety reasons. Emergency funding was received from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and work was able to begin to repair the damage.



2013

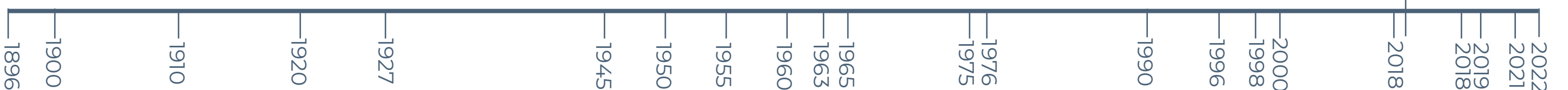




Replacing the piles of the Pier is never an easy task and involves bringing a specialist work barge alongside. Heavy piling equipment drives the pile deep into the seabed, providing a firm foundation for the deck of the Pier.



2014

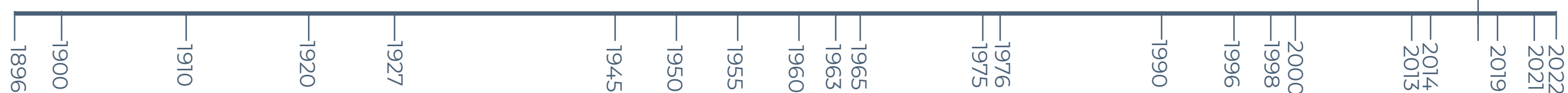




The National Lottery Heritage funded “Foundations for the Future” project began in 2016. This aimed to secure the long-term future of the Pier. 42 timber piles were replaced along with large sections of decking. Marine Villas also underwent a complete redevelopment to house a new cafe, exhibition space, community radio station and gift shop.



2018

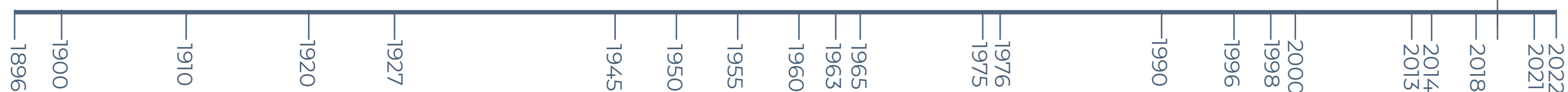




On 3rd April 2019 actor and television presenter Timothy West, who is an honorary patron of the National Pier Society, officially reopening the Pier, following the £2.2 million restoration.



2019

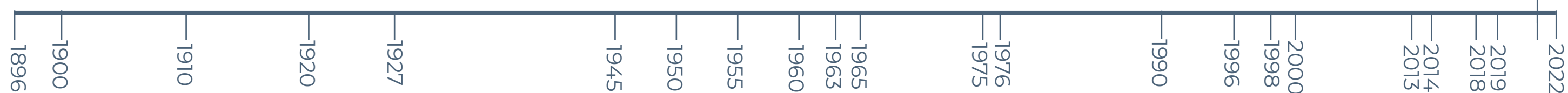


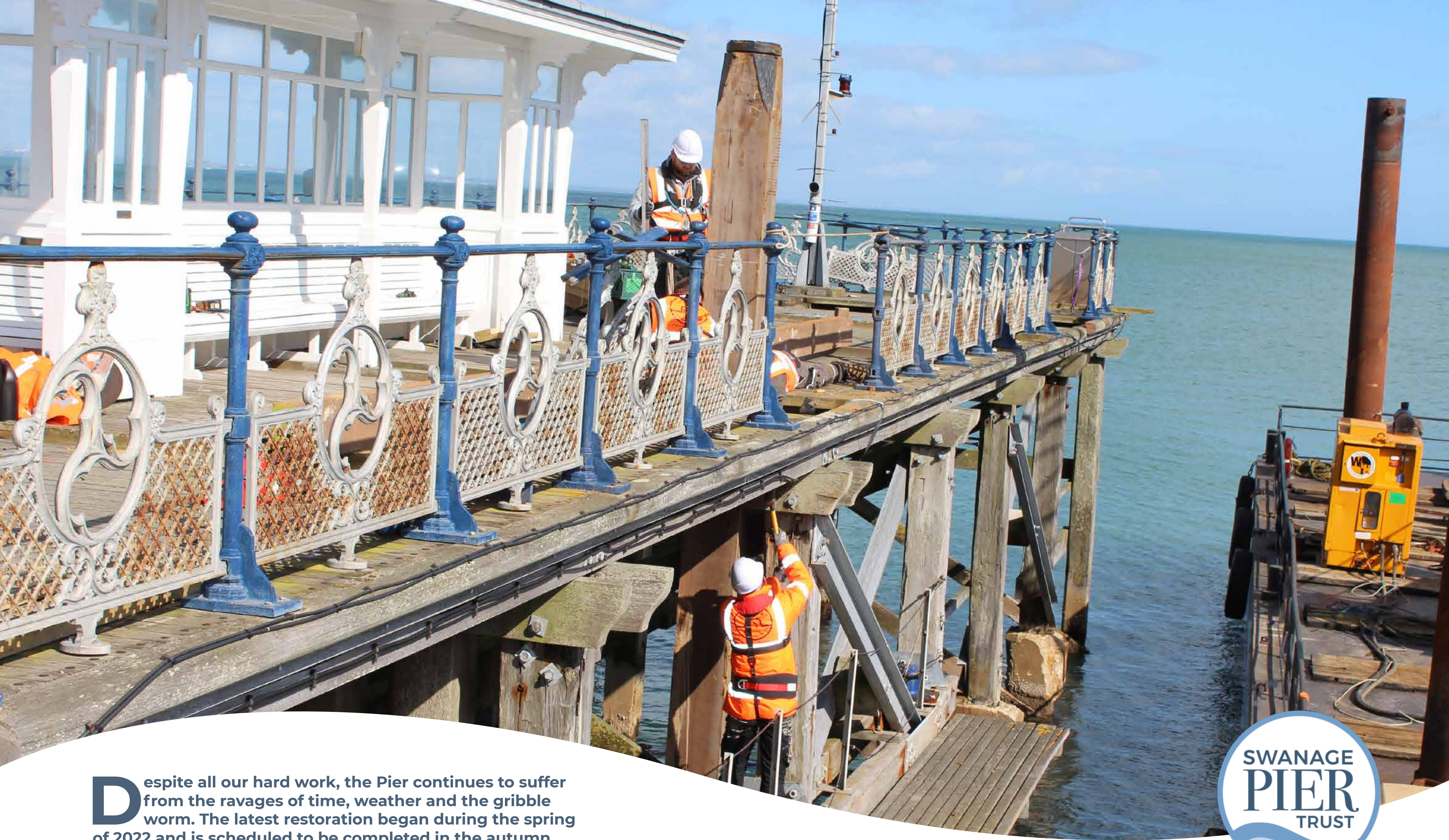


Fundraising is vital to maintaining the Pier. In 2021 we invited people to dedicate a light on the Pier to someone special, as part of our 'Lighting up Lives' event. It was an enormous success, with 270 lights being sponsored raising a staggering £3,000.



2021





Despite all our hard work, the Pier continues to suffer from the ravages of time, weather and the gribble worm. The latest restoration began during the spring of 2022 and is scheduled to be completed in the autumn.



2022

